

Dear Parent/Guardian or **[or actual names]**,

This year, **[insert school name]** is making a special effort to ensure that all students fully benefit from their education by attending school regularly. Student attendance is an essential first step for students to learn. The pandemic created many barriers for students, and we want you to know that our school is committed to supporting your student to attend and access their education. Your students' future is our first priority, and we want to partner with you to ensure their success.

DID YOU KNOW?

- By being present at school, your child learns valuable social skills and has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with other students and school staff.
- Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with schoolwork, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences (excused and unexcused) can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (just two days a month or about 18 days in a year) increases the chance that your student will not read or master math at the same level as their peers.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By 9th grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

We miss your student when they are not in school and we value their contributions to our community. We would like you to help ensure that your student attends regularly and is successful in school. If your student is going to be absent, please contact **[insert attendance secretary's name]** at **[insert attendance secretary's phone number]**. **[Insert additional policies or expectations including signing and returning this information].**

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

We know that there are a wide variety of reasons that students are absent from school, from health concerns to transportation challenges. There are many people in our building prepared to help you if you or your student face challenges in getting to school regularly or on time. **[Insert here list of resources or preferred contact person. Examples include nurse, counselor, interventionist, etc.]** We promise to track attendance daily, to notice when your student is missing from class, communicate with you to understand why they were absent, and to identify barriers and supports available to overcome challenges you may face in helping your student attend school.

SCHOOL POLICIES AND STATE LAWS

It is important that you understand our school policies and procedures, as well as Washington State Law, to ensure your child is successful in school. State law for mandatory attendance,

called the Becca Bill, requires children from age 8 to 17 to attend a public school, private school, or a district-approved home school program. Children that are 6- or 7-years-old are not required to be enrolled in school. However, if parents enroll their 6- or 7-year-old, the student must attend full-time. Youth who are 16 or older may be excused from attending public school if they meet certain requirements. <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.225>

We, the school, are required to take daily attendance and notify you when your student has an unexcused absence.

If your student has three unexcused absences in one month, state law (RCW 28A.225.020) requires we schedule a conference with you and your student to identify the barriers and supports available to ensure regular attendance. The district is obligated to develop a plan that requires an assessment to determine how to best meet the needs of your student and reduce absenteeism if they are in middle or high school.

In elementary school after five excused absences in any month, or ten or more excused absences in the school year, the school district is required to contact you to schedule a conference at a mutually agreeable, reasonable time with at least one district employee, to identify the barriers and supports available to you and your student. A conference is not required if your student has provided a doctor's note or pre-arranged the absence in writing and the parent, student and school have made plan so your student does not fall behind academically. If your student has an Individualized Education Program or a 504 Plan the team that created the plan needs to reconvene.

We are required by state law to file a petition with the Juvenile court sometime between your child's seventh unexcused absences in any month or fifteen unexcused absences within the school year, alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010, the mandatory attendance laws. The petition will be automatically stayed and your student and family will be referred to a Community Engagement Board or other coordinated means of intervention. **[Insert language here about your district's community engagement board process here or if your district is three hundred students or less your other coordinated means of intervention to ameliorate truancy]**. If our collective efforts are not enough to increase your student's attendance, the stay may be lifted and the court may require a hearing.

At **[insert school name]**, we have established the following rules on attendance that will help you ensure your student is attending regularly. **[Insert school policies & procedures on excused and unexcused absences, tardies, etc. excerpted from your Student Rights & Responsibilities Handbook or provide a link to your handbook here.]**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required immunizations.

- Follow our **district and state health guidelines** on when to keep your child home due to illness.
- Avoid appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Keep track of your student's attendance. Missing more than 9 days could put your student at risk of falling behind.
- Talk to your student about the importance of attendance.
- Talk to your students' teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs.

Sincerely,

[Insert principal's name]

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the attendance policies and procedures in **[insert school/district]**.

_____ Date _____